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Christianity and Crisis

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Can Americans Take Criticism?

A WELL-KNOWN senator, just returned from six weeks in Europe, is shocked by the widespread criticism and misrepresentation of things American which he found there—the result he is sure of unfriendly propaganda. A visitor at the recent World's Y.M.C.A. Conference in Edinburgh writes of the sensitiveness of the American delegates, as they "listened to the equation of capitalism and communism as equivalent evils to be combated, as our European friends think of it." One well-known American delegate "stood it as long as he could and then got up and very tartly stated that we think our system with various checks is quite all right." The chairman of the editorial board of this journal, returning from the World Conference of Christian Youth at Oslo, says in an important article in the "Christian Century" for August 20, entitled "They All Fear America":

"The purpose of this account is to call the attention of American Christians to the precarious nature of our position in the world to-day, as many informal conferences at this gathering revealed it to me. Coming at the end of four months spent in Europe this winter my discussion with delegates from India, Africa, and various states of Europe gave me a very strong sense of uneasiness about the position of our nation. It must be recorded first of all that the representatives from Asia and Africa were almost uniformly critical of this nation."

Now it is a familiar fact of experience, within any large family where there is some degree of financial dependence between any of its branches, that it is human nature for the recipients to be frequently sensitive and critical—as well as sometimes grateful—toward their benefactors; and likewise for the latter to be sensitive toward and resentful of this attitude. There are enough straws blowing all around the world these stormy days to indicate that it will be well for Americans to ponder such familiar family situations—where there is often so much to be said on both sides; and to look carefully for whatever these family problems may have to suggest, when similar strains and paradoxes develop among the family of nations.

Plainly this attitude on the part of other nations is in part a mirror held up to our own national short-comings, especially to some that we prefer not to face,—inviting us

"To see ourselves as others see us."

It is significant that Reinhold Niebuhr, in the article just quoted, puts his finger on the very sore spot which President Coffin likewise stresses in this journal for August 4. Says the former: "The primary root of resentment against us in Africa and Asia undoubtedly is our failure to achieve more Christian standards in race relations." It is certainly ironic that in the same issue of the "Christian Century" there should appear an article by E. Stanley Jones on "India's Caste System and Ours"; and also an editorial item on "What Happened to the Negro Baptists at Copenhagen," asserting that racial discrimination by the Danish hotels during the meeting of the Baptist World Alliance was due to instructions in letters from white American Baptist delegates which the hotel-keepers took to be official. "So it seems that the cause of the trouble in the Baptist ranks was not the Danes at all. It was the color prejudice of Americans, trying to force the rest of the world to endorse their denial of social justice."

One dislikes to think what the Soviet and the Indian press will say when they read the issues of the "Saturday Review of Literature" for August 2, 23, and 30. On the 2nd, Norman Cousins wrote a leading editorial entitled "Bystanders Are Not Innocent," in which he told side by side the experiences of a professor and his wife in Germany at the hands of Nazi gangsters in 1938, and those of a Jewish graduate student in an unnamed American mid-western university famed for its liberalism, who was set upon and beaten up last spring by three undergraduates in the coffee shop of the leading hotel near the campus, for the sole offence of being a Jew—while the only bystander who protested suffered cuts and bruises for his interference. The issue for the 23rd then carried a chorus of letters calling for names and places—and a straightforward letter from the editor of the "Daily Iowan," the student newspaper at the University of Iowa, saying that the incident took place substantially as nar-

rated at Iowa City on May 6, 1947. On August 30 Mr. Cousins wrote again on "Bystanders Become Active," reviewing the vigorous discussion all over Iowa, led by the "Des Moines Register" and college and church leaders of the state, on the significance of the incident:

"Perhaps the most salutary aspect of the entire affair is that the citizens of Iowa have been exposed to some healthy moral and social soul-searching. In press, school, and pulpit, there has been a sincerely deep reexamination and reappraisal of individual and group attitudes, convictions, and prejudices."

Lord Acton has helped all later generations to understand that the possession of power tends to corrupt its holders, and that the corruption increases with the amount of the power. Our own generation is learning the hard way that power also tends to breed resentment and even hatred, quite as often as gratitude for benefits received, in those who find themselves dependent on that power. An American who spent most of the last war in the Far East remarked lately that he is troubled to find in 1947 that America is incurring so much of the criticism and bitterness in that part of the world that in 1940 were directed toward Great Britain—in spite of the fact that our foreign policy has meanwhile become so much more responsible and well-meaning.

It will be well for our children's future if the richest and most powerful nation in the world today can learn to take the criticism which, whether more or less justified, is inevitable in the present state of the world so long as human nature remains what it is—in that spirit of good sportsmanship and with that saving salt of humor, of which we Americans—not without reason—are so proud. C. W. G.

The Marshall Plan

The sixteen European nations, which are banded together to work out a common plan of economic rehabilitation in coordination with America, have made their report. It is a statesmanlike report, full of detailed information but also clear in its general principles. The report proves that Europe requires from America a total of 22 billion dollars worth of goods in excess of its own production, over a period of four years. This means roughly five billion dollars worth of aid in loans and outright grants per year for the next four years.

It is to be hoped that the President will call a special session of Congress to deal with this urgent problem. In any event it presents our nation with the gravest decisions since the war; and public de-

bate will center upon these issues throughout the coming months. We must deal with the whole complex of problems, embodied in what is now known as the "Marshall plan," more fully in later issues. But it is worth emphasizing the importance of these issues immediately. No decision of war-time was more fateful than those which our nation is now called upon to make.

Since a new isolationism is arising in the nation which will challenge the wisdom of our aid to Europe or which will seek to whittle it down to the lowest possible minimum, it is important that all of us who are committed to the proposition that America must bear responsibilities commensurate with its power, should know just what is at stake in the Marshall Plan.

Europe is in dire economic straits and cannot possibly get on its feet unaided. We cannot avoid the spread of either economic chaos or of political totalitarianism or of both (the latter being the fruit of the former) if we do not come to the aid of a European economy which is threatened with complete collapse. Our aid need not, however, be prompted purely by either humanitarian concern for the starving or by concern for the preservation of political liberty in Europe, though it is to be hoped that these motives will be operative. We must furnish aid also in the interest of our own economic health. We are exporting 12 billion dollars worth of goods in excess of imports. These exports are a guarantee against a deflation in the American economy. It is obvious, however, that an impoverished world must stop buying from a wealthy nation, no matter how desperate its needs, if we do not exercise the greatest possible generosity in the terms of payment. It is highly significant that motives of self-interest thus come to the support of a policy which generosity alone might well prompt. It is good that this is so, since even the best nations are incapable of pure generosity. It is because motives of national self-interest converge upon motives of generosity, that we have a right to hope that the Marshall Plan will be accepted, no matter how the isolationists may rage.

Perhaps an even more important issue is whether we ought not to reinstitute both rationing and price control in order to avoid inflationary tendencies in this policy, and also to overcome the arguments of those who will oppose the policy on the ground that it will raise our already high prices. We may be sure that the politicians of both parties will be exceedingly reluctant to embark upon a policy of price control in a period before a great election. If this is to be accomplished it will have to be done by the pressure of public opinion, particularly opinion which is politically disinterested.

R. N.

Christianity in Communist North China

CHARLES C. WEST

NORTH CHINA looks to the new observer like a place where Christianity and Communism face each other on their experimental frontiers. Marxist leaders of Chinese Communism are orthodox but are seeking by trial and error a workable social system for their areas. They seem independent of control or material aid from the Soviet Union, yet their communion of outlook with Moscow is perfect. The Christian church, also, under Chinese leaders decimated but seasoned through the war, is seeking new ways to relate the Gospel to the whole life of the people. One senses that the old split between secularized liberalism and irrelevant fundamentalism is being fused by deeper faith and sounder thought.

The Communist proclamations follow with deceptive clarity from Mao Tze-tung's interpretation of Marxist theory. "Their language, literature, folk practices, habits, and religious beliefs must be respected," said Mao in a 1944 speech on minorities. "The most important liberties of the citizen are those of speech, publication, assembly, organization, thought, belief, and person." Communist leaders have also consistently maintained that missionaries, Chinese or foreign, are welcome if they do their work within the framework of the Communist social system and law (or, more significantly—"provided they are not anti-communist" in social effect or teaching). Medical work is favored. Some types of social service work are welcomed. Education, evangelism, and religious practices are permitted.

No simple reason can be given for the ways in which the facts contradict these promises. But the complexities suggest three categories: (1) Communist theory, (2) The needs of Communist policy, (3) The confused social message of the churches.

The most recent authority for Communist theory comes from Mao Tze-tung's "China's New Democracy" (1944) in which there is one reference to religion:

"Chinese Communists may form an anti-imperialist united front politically with certain idealists (in the philosophical sense—CW) and disciples of religions, but can never approve their idealism or religious teachings."

The context of this statement is obviously strategic. It is in the interests of leading China to eventual Communism, dialectically through a double revolution. Cooperation with and freedom for non-Communist thought and life are part of history's movement into a "New Democracy" based on an "alliance of several classes" to promote industrialism in a mixed economy. This is the first revolution. The second, or socialist one would be the final victory of the proletariat because of its overwhelm-

ing majority in an industrial society, under Communist leadership. Hence the cultural, political and economic expressions of the "New Democracy" may, within defined limits, take forms somewhat at odds with the final Communist ideal. Marx and Lenin provide resources for understanding the provisional function of these free expressions.

Mao makes only one, thoroughly orthodox, modification in the Marx-Lenin view of history, on which liberals have seized to make him out a democrat and pragmatist. Due to the influence of the Soviet Union, the first revolution, formerly bourgeois capitalist, can now become a controlled development toward ultimate proletarian (Communist) supremacy. The Communists' present desire to join a coalition government is theoretically based on the supposed identity of Sun Yat-sen's program with the first revolution. The Kuomintang liberals who foster this democratic socialism are seen as representatives of the petty bourgeoisie which is also oppressed in present day China.

There are also two limitations on free expression in the "New Democracy" itself. First, the culture of this interim stage must be "scientific," eliminating all idealistic attempts to separate thought from action. Truth must be sought "in concrete facts." "Only the revolutionary practice of millions of people can be taken as the gauge for measuring truth." Hence bourgeois natural science may be an ally of Communism in thought, but idealists and religionists must be tolerated only on the basis of specific projects or political strategy. Even this pre-socialist phase of society must work to eliminate religion from its culture.

Second, the "New Democracy" cannot tolerate people who are "anti-Communist." This term is not defined. Sometimes it is used only to describe those "reactionaries" who oppose coalition government. Sometimes it applies to all who oppose the movement of history as Mao has outlined it. Mao says such people will be destroyed. The implication is that impersonal historical forces will destroy them.

Secular liberals in Peiping and elsewhere have welcomed this development of theory. In their eyes Mao has: (1) Established a pragmatic, democratic criterion of truth itself, which depends on the will of the people. They point out how the whole shift from industrial revolution to land reform has demonstrated this; how truly popular the Yenan government was; and other evidences of response to popular pressure in public policy. (2) Eliminated the necessity of a violent proletarian revolution. Hence Chinese communism has become essentially pragmatic in its strategy and hope. (3) Combined a pro-

gressive social policy with a guarantee of the basic democratic freedoms. These are subject only to the obligation of the holders to be socially responsible. They must not attack with their power the order by which the rights and security of all are maintained, and they must be socially useful.

On the other hand a Christian point of view emphasizes the dangers in this theoretical foundation. It is clear that there is a basic self deception here as in all Communist thought about the truth of their theory, hence about the righteousness of their actions. The assumption that the Marx-Lenin interpretation of history and the dogmas attendant on it are (1) the scientific analysis of the social situation, and (2) the expression of proletarian class consciousness, leads to an atmosphere in which accurate analysis and creative activity are fruitless and dangerous. The identification of Communist activity with the inevitable movement of history leads to a moral irresponsibility and indifference to personality which strikes at the root of the Christian message. It also masks the struggle for power of a small group whose sociological base is not the proletariat, but the rural areas which it controls by efficient guerrilla activity, government, and propaganda. The dogma of economic determinism finally denies the only foundation on which human freedom can rest: recognition that the individual has a vocation and a destiny which transcends all communal structures and functions of this world. So at last, we can see that Mao's theory, like other Communist theory, is without the basic safeguards against irresponsible power which democracy requires. His conception of government "democratic centralization" is without any idea of the tension between those two words; it is designed to circumvent the checks on power present in all democracies. There is also no limit set on the power of the official to qualify the freedoms which Mao allows. There is no clear direction for treating those who refuse to think "scientifically," who insist on propagating what is regarded as error. There is ambiguity as to the rights of organizations whose functions seem irrelevant to the Communist pattern of social usefulness. In practice all these questions have been decided with great variations by local officials.

Yet the clarity of these dangers may hide from us the fact that Chinese communism is made of living human beings, and so cannot be condemned solely on its theory. Because the leaders are shrewd realists, we must raise the question whether, given peace and the challenge of a powerful, creative, non-communist social and economic movement, pragmatism might not in the long run isolate Marxist dogmatism into a small wing of the Party. Could not the Dialectic prove infinitely adjustable to social realities? Because also the mass of Communists have been won simply on the basis of land reform and other measures like it, we must recognize that the

Communist Party has crystallized on itself a vast amount of valid judgment on the social sins of China. To many Chinese it stands simply for ruthless tactics, better government, and a fairer economic system. Although Communism is ultimately totalitarian, its practical policies have brought some rural communities a measure of freedom from want and fear which they never knew before.

Communists and Christians first faced each other in rural North China in 1937 when the war began and Communist led guerrillas organized the countryside while the Japanese held the cities and rail lines. It was a time of high optimism followed by disillusionment. The liberal wing of Christians saw a working program of mass education and rural improvement under their leadership, slowly fade out under Communist pressure. This was despite dangerously close cooperation between some missionaries and the guerrillas. Although information about this pre-war period is meager, it is blamed by men of experience almost equally with Japanese persecution for the church's weakness and confusion in Communist areas today.

Despite this record, however, the Communists have taken pains since the war to define their promise of religious liberty in specific situations. To one field survey group a year ago they promised the right to open schools, and a social service project, under foreign missionary leadership and even welcomed foreign evangelists. CLARA,* the Communist distribution agency for UNNRA supplies, has sought the return of missionary doctors to one area and has promised that with proper authorization there will be no interference with their work, no pressure on Chinese doctors and patients who associate with them, and no interference with church life. Used in this connection was a previous proclamation by the Governor of the North China Border Region:

"For the purpose of uniting Catholics and Protestants for participation in reconstruction work—the following policies have been formulated: 1. Fundamental principle:—All citizens have a right to worship and to preach, at the same time they are free to disbelieve or criticize religion," and 2. "Status of mission members shall be the same as that of any citizen.—When they violate laws, they will be dealt with as anyone else, and the issue should not be confused with that of religion."

The setting of this "Fundamental principle" is important. The statement then goes on to define mission and church property as "public," belonging collectively to the members of the congregation. As a social organization the congregation must register with the local government after which its property and functions will be protected. These may include (1) preaching, (2) hospitals, (3) schools, (4) other welfare organizations. Schools, however, must be under special regulations elsewhere ex-

*Chinese Liberated Areas Relief Administration.

plained. The congregational representative in charge of property must be Chinese, but former missionary property may be returned through certain legal procedures. It is understood that the government may borrow property not in use and that all damage to property by whomever inflicted, shall be indemnified by Japan. Finally no control of the church, mission, or property is allowed from above. All problems must be solved locally.

From the Communist point of view it is clear that the whole question of relations with the Christian church is incidental to their main concern and program, whose economic pivots are land reform and productivity. In most of their territory Communists have confiscated mission property as part of their attitude toward all sizeable property holdings. In some cases they have done it directly while redistributing all land on a pattern of equality. Religious workers have been assigned enough of their own land to live on, by Communist standards. In at least one case this involved destroying a hospital, school, and several residences, even the bricks being carried away by "the people." Elsewhere the local foreign missionary was given public trial on trumped up charges against the hospital (it cut people's hearts out, allowed certain poor folk to die while it saved the rich, etc.). The total value of the labor of those who had thus died was totaled from the time of their death (sometimes 15 years before) and assessed the mission. Its property holdings were taken in part payment. In this as in other cases the use of the church was offered to the congregation.

The usual method of re-adjusting all property seems to be the accusation meeting in which a poor man is allowed to accuse a rich man, the latter's goods being confiscated in return. Sometimes this is a person to person change, sometimes the government takes the fine. In most cases the processes of "justice" are as farcical as in the case above. It is worth adding that the defendant may not answer charges against him—only confess his sins. One great problem is that these meetings are the "law" to which all who live in Communist areas are expected to conform.

The pull and haul of petty power politics without regard for standards of truth and justice is Chinese rather than Communist. So also are the principles of collective and "official" responsibility whereby one member of a group can be punished for the crimes of another, or a doctor is accountable for the death of a patient regardless of circumstances. The Communist use of these factors in their overall strategy has given them a demonic power, however, which threatens life and security as never before.

There is evidence that the control of top Communist leaders over questions of religion is negative rather than positive. They set general policy and permit lower officials to apply it, intervening only when they see need, in strategic terms. It is to their

interest to claim ignorance of specific abuses until they can explain them in terms of (1) the just demands of some social welfare measure like land reform, (2) anti-Communist political activity, (3) excessive but understandable popular resentment due to misunderstanding of the value of a mission's work, (4) the accidents of war. However, the past ten years have shown a definite shift in Communist attitude toward Christians which strongly suggests direction from above. Nineteen hundred thirty-seven was a honeymoon year, followed by slow deterioration, following the pattern of Communist relations with the Kuomintang and Russia's relations with the Allies. Immediately after the war there was much cooperation and many promises. It was then that one missionary evangelist actually set up work in Communist areas, and most of the promises above, were made. Then, following the failure of the Marshall mission and withdrawing of army peace teams, pressure on Christians increased. Bibles in some areas were confiscated. Church services increasingly spied on or prohibited. The missionary mentioned above was arrested, tried, and encouraged to leave. Newly captured mission stations were destroyed. One Chinese pastor was tortured to death on the charge of being "a running dog of the Americans." Recently there seems to be an improvement for present or former British missions. One hospital recently captured is still operating with a foreign-Chinese staff, and a school under Chinese leadership is the only example the author knows of an operating Christian educational institution in Communist areas. A foreign evangelist, however, has found it wise to dissociate herself from the local congregation in order not to complicate the issue of religious liberty with foreign influence.

The problem of productivity raises more basic questions for Christian work. The church is not, in Communist eyes, a productive institution. In a majority of cases, all church workers, even seminary teachers, must put in full time at another job to be eligible for food. In only a few cases is the work of a pastor or evangelist tolerated. The evidence on a Christian's right to support his church or its work with money or in kind, is contradictory. In some places there is no interference. In others, officials have forbidden an offering in the service and have threatened to confiscate all grain or other products brought to the church. The church, in short, is allowed no economic base here, whatever.

Teaching, medical and social welfare work are considered productive but raise immediately the question of control. There are Christian doctors working in Communist hospitals, even one record of a Christian teacher running a Communist school. But the Christian witness possible in these circumstances is problematical. Pre-war Christian schools, hospitals, rural experiment stations, and mass education projects, have all perforce closed or remained

closed in Communist areas, with the single exception mentioned above.

Fear of organizations opposed to their program is a final factor in determining Communist attitudes toward Christian work. The churches which grew out of American missions are triply suspect for their associations with the United States, the Kuomintang, and the Roman Catholics. American financial support is suspect, and only leaks through to mission churches by devious secret routes. Many Chinese Christians have suffered for their American friendships or the unpopularity of American foreign policy. There is undoubtedly some justification for this fear, and some deliberate use of it for other purposes. Especially in more conservative churches the Chinese Christians have absorbed the social reaction of their missionary fathers in the faith. On the other hand this conservatism is at best a very indirect aid to American policy, not an instrument thereof.

Christian contacts with the Kuomintang are more ambiguous. In many towns where the missionary establishment—church, school and hospital,—was the largest economic unit in the town, cooperation with local officials is inevitable, both in the constructive and the dubious sense. In many cases Christian laymen had been local officials. In one case the Communists on raiding a town found UNRRA supplies stored in a Christian school by local officials under suspicious circumstances. Communist fears, however, have gone so far as to suspect everyone who enters their territory without proper authorization, or who travels about too frequently. More than one pastor has been arrested on his parish calls in the country.

It is surprising, in view of the Roman Catholic Church's announced policy of anti-Communism, that persecution of its personnel has not been more severe. Probably the "New Democratic" theory exercises some restraint here, based on the conviction that individual expressions of religion are insignificant if an organization is not allowed to function as a unit. This article has refrained from drawing on Roman evidence because of that church's stand. Responsible leaders of Communism recognize that Protestantism has on the whole tried to be fairer to Communist politics and economics than has Romanism. The Roman Church has been far more of a landowner for profit, thus supporting many of its churches and orders. It has at times allowed anti-Communist political activities to find refuge on its property. It may have been guilty of usury. And it has tended to create economic communities which embody features to which Communists object, more than have Protestant churches. This is not to label the whole Roman Church with these characteristics, but only to point out that other churches have not on the whole raised these obstacles to smooth relations

with Communism. Yet despite this, much Communist policy ignores or blurs this distinction.

Do Communists, then, persecute Christians? The answer seems to be, usually not as Christians. An absolute prohibition of church services has been rare. Many evangelists are allowed to do their work quietly. In one place a district association of churches was allowed to meet, and the author knows of two cases in which evangelists of high reputation are allowed to work into Communist territory from government held bases. On the other hand, wherever Christian work crosses one of the policies or attitudes described above, it stands in danger. The opinion of Christian leaders in Peiping would summarize the situation somewhat as follows:

1. Communist law and policy is undependable, subordinate to the gaining and maintenance of political power, or to irresponsible destruction.

2. The Communists cannot, despite their sincere desire in some cases, tolerate for long an organization which is not under their control or an individual with independent influence. On this rock all Christian work will eventually founder. The Communist system, in short, leaves no room for freedom.

3. The Communist conception of society, being materialistic and without regard for persons as such, leaves no useful social function for the church and puts no value on full time church work. Thus the development of leadership, of intelligent faith, and relevant Gospel are hamstrung.

4. Because Communism cannot understand the Christian's relation to God, except as self-deception, the actions of Christians will always be assigned economic or political motives, and dealt with accordingly. Christianity will always be suspect as a cover for an alien class or nation's activities.

Yet balanced against these are two other points:

5. Where the difficulties in the way of Christian work have been overcome for brief periods the credit usually belongs to personalities on both sides. The opposition of Communists to Christianity is ideological, not personal, and the ideology is not in complete control.

6. The Christian challenge to Communism in North China has nowhere been truly adequate, presenting a social, educational and evangelistic program inseparably linked. Communists have rarely met individuals and never a whole community of Christians ready to die for such a live and relevant faith.

There are also a few Chinese Christian leaders who are more optimistic, seeing democracy in Mao Tze-tung's theory, and hope in the personalities of Communist acquaintances. They point out that Communists respect the character building work of Christian institutions, and welcome social welfare work, while Christians have yet to present a strong witness in Communist areas along these lines.

For Christian action two points stand out clearly:

1. A missionary to the Communists would have to be one called in his own conviction to this service. He would have to be certified by Communist authorities. He would have to practice a vocation other than the ministry as a base for his mission. His attitude toward Communist efforts would have to be constructive regardless of provocation. He would have to be prepared for any eventuality in living conditions, sudden persecution, meaningless interference, or even death.

2. Christians must develop a Christian understanding of the specific reforms and organization for which Communism stands at the moment. They must attack the problem of the people's livelihood from the point of view of the personal Christian community and work out tentative economic solutions which could be extended outside the fellowship. The only such economic expression of Christian community which has actually seen trial is the industrial and farm cooperative. How it would fare in Communist areas is not sure but it offers one method of presenting the Christian way of life constructively within the area of Communist concern.

And underlying this action, the author would like

to suggest the following questions on which Christian-Communist relations seem to hinge:

1. What kind of power will the Communists recognize and adjust to? Christian work itself depends entirely on personal power, creative in the realm of freedom. Is it unrealistic to hope that this power, purged of all questionable connections, may be given a place in Communist society? Should Christian realists support some secular material power which could force the Communists to compromise for strategic reasons?

2. What philosophical foundation, especially in the educational system, must the church seek as a vehicle for its understanding of life over against dialectical materialism? How do we differ from the Roman answer?

3. What sociological foundation, what material freedom from the government control, must the church and its allied work demand?

These questions will be answered in the next few years by Christian leaders. It will be well if behind these answers is a clearly thought out set of middle axioms of the Christian ethic, in the light of China's needs and the condition (including the sin) of her Christian church.

The World Church: News and Notes

Emergency Aid Ready in Japan

More than 360,000 pounds of American relief supplies have been earmarked for emergency use in the flood areas north of Tokyo by the Licensed Agencies for Relief in Asia, according to a cable received from LARA representatives in Japan.

Contents of the cable were made public by Henry R. Birkel, official of Church World Service. The cable read: "Over 158 tons food, 250 bales clothing, nine tons soap going immediately to flood areas."

The 11 church, welfare and labor agencies of LARA have sent more than 5,000,000 pounds of food, clothing, medicine and other supplies to Japan since receiving official endorsement for relief activities from the Allied Occupation forces late last year. LARA is the only voluntary relief organization permitted to operate in the former enemy country.

Aid is distributed without regard to religious or political affiliation. Except in emergencies such as the present flood, most of its supplies are utilized in sustaining projects in institutions caring for babies, orphans, the handicapped and the sick—where the need is greatest.

The Church and the Political Prisoners in Holland

During the past year there have been profound discussions between representatives of the different Protestant Churches and the Roman Catholic Church and some twenty-five former leaders of the National Socialist movement in the Netherlands, who are still in internment camps in Holland. As a result of these discus-

sions the General Synod of the Netherlands Reformed Church has published a message, which was read in all churches. This message was drawn up by the Protestant Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, united in the Interchurch Council, which was set up during the war.

"During the war the churches in Holland openly bore witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and opposed all evil deeds of the oppressor. They also prayed for the enemies of our people, who made it suffer so bitterly, that they might repent. After the war the churches had to exhort the government and the people to do justice and to be merciful according to the will of God.

"In the treatment of the political delinquents in the prisoners' camps a mentality manifested itself in our people which was unworthy of a Christian nation. Our people still have the tendency to be blind to their own sins and to take the law into their own hands and to banish those who have been punished already by the government.

"The churches therefore think it their duty to comply with a request made by some twenty-five political prisoners, who once played a prominent part in the national-socialist movement in Holland to make a confession of guilt to the Dutch people and to give an explanation of their attitude during the war."

In the *Confession of Guilt* the political delinquents speak of "the wide gulf between us and the majority of the people, a gulf which is hardly to be bridged by goodwill only. We often failed to realize the real meaning and the disastrous consequences of measures imposed upon us by the aggressor. We confess that we have

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often maintained silence when we ought to have spoken and that we have given the occupying power our co-operation where we ought to have broken this off.

"We understand why the Dutch people blame us for every sign of solidarity with the enemy, when we think of those who were persecuted, deported, tortured, executed, murdered, of the diabolic annihilation of Jewish men, women and children.

"A tragic confusion of thought and strange totalitarian ideologies made us blind to the horrible consequences of all this, though we were over and over again warned earnestly that these ideologies were fundamentally opposed to Christian principles.

"Now that we are confronted with the question of guilt, we feel an inner urge to entrust our answer to this question to the churches, which during and after the years of occupation formed a solid centre where a nation in distress could find consolation.

"We pray that God may forgive us, that He may save our people from permanent hatred and save us and our fellow-prisoners from embitterment which might bar for us the way of reconciliation."

Great Need of Additional Churches

The Copenhagen Church Foundation, which was started by laymen more than a generation ago, to erect churches in Copenhagen in step with the population growth of the metropolis to prevent its parishes from growing too large, is today faced with new great tasks as still more churches and assembly halls are needed in the outskirts of the city.

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The parish congregations throughout the country support this work by an annual collection and recently a new method has been tried, in that a number of parishes, particularly in Copenhagen proper, have "adopted" a certain new district and have taken upon themselves to work for the erection of a church in the district concerned.

Program of Action to Meet Food Situation in the Winter of 1947-48

An appeal to the American people for broader relief measures to counteract "widespread frustration and despair overseas" . . . "even if this should involve the reestablishment of public controls on particular items," has been made by the Executive Committee of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.

Describing the "continuing desperate need for relief overseas" as being "of far longer duration and more appalling magnitude than we had anticipated," the Federal Council executive group urged acceptance by the public of responsibility for meeting this emergency "even at the cost of a reduction in the general standard of living."

A program of action outlined by the Executive Committee includes the following major points:

Addressing itself to the United States Government, the statement asserted:

ONE. That the public should be informed of the peril of impending bankruptcy in many nations.

TWO. It should be emphasized that present high food costs are due more to our own prosperity than to the relatively small amounts now being shipped overseas.

THREE. That the American people, now enjoying the highest level of income in history, be urged to reduce by 10 per cent or more, their consumption of such foods as can readily be transported overseas for relief.

FOUR. That plans be made to ship sufficient quantities of food, fuel, and clothing, even if this involves reestablishment of some public controls.

And addressing the church people of the United States, the Federal Council statement said:

ONE. Church groups should consider measures by which eating habits may be readjusted and consumption reduced on cereal grains, meat and fats—all important in the relief program.

TWO. The money thus saved should go to foreign relief.

THREE. "Each household, industry, store, and place of public assembly" should conserve coal by a campaign for efficient operation and the avoidance of over-heating.

FOUR. Church groups should tell congress and government officials of their convictions about our obligation to share with those in tragic suffering.

In conclusion the Federal Council statement urged that denominational relief bodies present to their members "the grave spiritual implications" of this situation and afford them opportunities to respond to the urgent plight of churches overseas.

Author in This Issue

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